

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ERDA-05

ACDA-05 OMB-01 /062 W
----- 003340

R 120315Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9321
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC
SECDEF WASHDC
CNO WASHDC
CINCPACFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 0658

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, NZ
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP (NPW) VISITS

CANBERRA ALSO PASS DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS
CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

REF: STATE 041598

1. SUMMARY. I DISCUSSED NPW VISITS WITH PM ROWLING
MARCH 11. ROWLING SAID USG ACCEPTANCE OF ABSOLUTE
LIABILITY IN CASE OF REACTOR INCIDENT CAST NEW LIGHT
ON QUESTION BUT NOTED VISITS STILL POSE SOME POLITICAL
PROBLEMS. HE STATED HE WOULD HAVE APPROPRIATE DEPART-
MENTS STUDY QUESTION AND PROMISED REPLY WHEN STUDIES
ARE COMPLETED. END SUMMARY

2. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER ROWLING PRIMARILY TO DISCUSS
NPW VISITS AND TO LEAVE WITH HIM AN AIDE MEMOIRE ALONG
THE LINES OUTLINED REFTEL (COPY BEING POUCHED TO DEPART-
MENT). I NOTED THAT THE GNZ'S RATIONALE FOR STOPING NPW
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VISITS WAS BASED ON A DEMAND FOR USG ACCEPTANCE OF TOTAL

LIABILITY IN CASE OF A NUCLEAR REACTOR ACCIDENT. WITH THE NEW LEGISLATION THIS DEMAND HAD BEEN MET AND USG HOPED THAT NPW VISITS COULD RESUME IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ROWLING SAID ACCEPTANCE OF LIABILITY PUT A DIFFERENT LIGHT ON THE QUESTION. HE WILL HAVE THE ISSUE STUDIED BY THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED AND PROMISED A REPLY AS SOON AS THEIR EFFORTS WERE COMPLETED.

3. ROWLING NOTED THAT THE NPW VISITS REMAIN A POLITICAL ISSUE AND INDICATED THE POSSIBLE PRESENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON BOARD WARSHIPS MIGHT ALSO BE DIFFICULT POLITICAL PROBLEM. I REPLIED THAT USG POLICY WAS TO NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY THE PRESENCE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. I ALSO NOTED THAT SUCCESSIVE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENTS HAD AFFIRMED THAT ANZUS WAS THE CORNERSTONE OF NEW ZEALAND DEFENSE POLICY AND THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONRY WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ANZUS SHIELD. GNZ REFUSAL TO PERMIT SHIP VISITS UNLESS THE US DENIED THE PRESENCE ON BOARD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS WOULD, IN EFFECT, DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF ANZUS. MR. ROWLING WAS NONCOMMITAL IN REPLY.

4. COMMENT - GNZ PROCEDURE WILL BE TO HAVE NPW VISITS AND LIABILITY QUESTIONS STUDIED BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENSE AND OTHER INTERESTED DEPARTMENTS AFTER WHICH CABINET DECISION WILL HAVE TO BE MADE. THIS WILL TAKE SOME TIME AND WE ARE UNLIKELY TO SEE AN IMMEDIATE DECISION. IN THE MEANTIME I BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT, BOTH HERE AND IN WASHINGTON, TO IMPRESS UPON THE GNZ THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NPW VISITS AND THE SECURITY SHIELD PROVIDED BY ANZUS. THE UPCOMING VISIT OF DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS AND THE APRIL ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING PROVIDE EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR US TO HAMMER HOME THIS POINT.
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